

AMENDMENT

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend paragraph 21 as follows:

Figure 1 schematically illustrates the automated freezer 20 of the present invention. The automated freezer 20 stores and freezes food items 22. In one example, the food items 22 are hamburger patties. The automated freezer 20 can use forced air convection or can be a cold wall freezer. Preferably, the temperature in the automated freezer 20 is between -18°C and -21°C .

Please amend paragraph 24 as follows:

The buffer 34 is removably attached to the automated freezer 20. The automated freezer 20 includes a projection 36 sized and shaped to fit into a hole 38 in the buffer 34. When the buffer 34 is attached to the automated freezer 20, the buffer 34 is slid such that the projection 36 is received in the hole 38, securing the buffer 34 to the automated freezer 20. The buffer ~~20~~34 can be removed from the automated freezer 20 by sliding the buffer 34 in the opposite direction to remove the projection 36 from the hole 38. However, it is to be understood that the automated freezer 20 can include the hole 38 and the buffer 34 can include the projection 36.

Please amend paragraph 28 as follows:

The automated freezer 20 further includes a sensor 98 that detects when the platform 46 reaches a predetermined location in the automated freezer 20. When the platform 46 reaches the predetermined location, the automated freezer 20 and the cartridge 30 needs to be reloaded with food items 22. When the sensor 98 detects the platform 46, the motor 44 automatically lowers the platform 46. A visual indicator ~~100~~102 on the door 24 indicates that the automated freezer 20 and the cartridge 30 must be reloaded with food items 22 to alert an operator to load additional food items 22.

Please amend paragraph 29 as follows:

The food items 22 are loaded in the cartridge 30 prior to loading the cartridge 30 in the automated freezer 20. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the cartridge 30 includes a first portion 58 and a second portion 60. The first portion 58 includes a half-circular bottom portion 62 having a half-circular cutout 64, and the second portion 60 includes a half-circular bottom portion 66 having a half-circular cutout 68. The first portion 58 also includes an attachment feature 70 having a hole 72, and the second portion 60 includes an attachment feature 74 having a protrusion 76 sized and shaped to fit in the hole 72. Preferably, the cartridge 30 includes two of each attachment features 70, 74. However it is to be understood that any number of attachment features 70, 74 can be employed. Also, it is to be understood that the first ~~halfportion~~ 58 can include the attachment feature 74 and the second ~~halfportion~~ 60 can include the attachment feature 70.

Please amend paragraph 30 as follows:

Alternately, the food items 22 are loaded into the cartridge 30 by a manufacturer when the food items 22 are produced. In this example, the cartridge 30 would be shipped to the user of the automated freezer ~~3020~~ with the food items 22 already stacked. After the cartridge 30 is empty, the cartridge would be disposed of.

Please amend paragraph 33 as follows:

When the loaded cartridge 30 is positioned in the freezer compartment 28 of the automated freezer 20, the upper end 32 is first inserted into the opening 100 of the buffer ~~3234~~. The upper end 32 of the cartridge 30 has an outer diameter less than the inner diameter of the opening 100 in the bottom of the buffer 34. The cartridge 30 is pushed slightly upwardly into the buffer ~~3234~~ to then allow the bottom edge 86 to enter the freezer compartment 28. When the bottom edge 86 enters the freezer compartment 28, the platform 46 passes through the cutout 88 in the cartridge 30 to allow the bottom edge 86 of the cartridge 30 to enter the freezer compartment 28.

Please amend paragraph 35 as follows:

When the cartridge 30 is removed from the automated freezer 20 to reload the food items 22, a plurality of arms 90 in the buffer 34 retain any food items 22 remaining in the buffer 34 and prevent them from falling from the buffer 34. Figures 4A and 4B illustrate the buffer 34 before the cartridge ~~9030~~ is loaded into the automated freezer 90. The plurality of arms 90 are in a first position and extend into an inner passage 96 of the buffer 34. The plurality of arms 90 are moveable between the first position (shown in Figures 4A and 4B) and a second position (shown in Figures 5A and 5B) substantially perpendicular to the first position. The arms 90 are biased to the first position by a resilient member 92. Preferably, there are four arms 90. However, it is to be understood that any number of arms 90 can be employed.

Please amend paragraph 39 as follows:

The automated freezer 20 of the present invention can be used with an automated grill, such as described in co-pending patent application serial number 10/124,629 entitled "Automated grill" filed on April 17, 2002. The automated freezer 20 can also be used with a vertical grill, such as described in co-pending patent application serial number 10/
726,017 entitled "Grilling Component" filed on December 2, 2003 and having attorney docket number 60246-297.